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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/780,701	02/19/2004	Iwao Sugiura	042113	3201

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EXAMINER	
WARREN, MATTHEW E	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2815	

MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
12/19/2008	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/780,701	SUGIURA ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	MATTHEW E. WARREN	2815	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE *3* MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *12 November 2008*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-19 and 21-30* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) *3,6 and 22-28* is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4,5,7-19,21,29 and 30* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☒ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☒ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action is in response to the RCE and Amendment filed on November 12, 2008.

Claim Objections

Claim 10 is objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c), as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Applicant is required to cancel the claim(s), or amend the claim(s) to place the claim(s) in proper dependent form, or rewrite the claim(s) in independent form.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-19, 29, and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Domae (US Pub. 2002/0005584 A1) in view of Vigna et al. (US 6,605,873 B1) and Applicant's Prior Art Figures 1-4 (APAF)

In re claim 1, Domae shows (fig. 4) a semiconductor device comprising a substrate (100); a first multilayer interconnection structure (107A) formed on said substrate; and second multilayer interconnection structure (107B) formed on said first multilayer interconnection structure, said first multilayer interconnection structure

including a first interlayer insulation film (107A) and a first interconnection layer (101A not labeled but next to area 105) included in said first interlayer insulation film; said second multilayer interconnection structure including a second interlayer insulation film (107B) and a second interconnection layer (101B) included in said second interlayer insulation film, said first multilayer interconnection structure including a pillar (not labeled, but 109 in other layers) vertically extending straight from a surface of said substrate and reaching at least said second multilayer interconnection structure (the via at the very left of the device), said first interconnection layer being formed so as to avoid said pillar. The pillar is formed in a region of the substrate right underneath the electrode pad (102). Domae shows all of the elements of the claims except the pillar being provided on a device isolation structure. Vigna shows (figs. 1-3) a semiconductor device in which a mechanical stress bearing structure (31) comprising pillar/via/plug portions (24, 19, and 12) is formed beneath an electrode pad (28). The mechanical stress bearing structure is formed on the device isolation structure (field oxide regions 6) of the substrate. With this configuration, mechanical stress exerted during a wire bonding process is distributed to the peripheral areas of substrate and reduced on the active region components (3) (col. 3, lines 20-36). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the pillar structure of Domae by forming it on a device isolation structure as taught by Vigna to distribute stress from the device regions of the substrate to the device isolation regions during a wiring bonding process.

In re the remaining limitation of the claims concerning the first and second interlayer insulating films each having a desired Young's Modulus, Domae and Vigna do not disclose those properties of the film. However, the APAF 1 shows that a first interlayer insulating film (14-17) and a second interlayer insulating film (18-21) each have the desired properties of the claimed invention in that the first film has Young's Modulus lower than the Young's Modulus of the second film. The specification on pages 7-12 lists all of the properties of the first interlayer insulating film of the porous organic film and the second interlayer insulating film of a CVD material. With such a configuration, the semiconductor device combined with the metallization structure has reduced signal delay and high speed operation. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the insulation materials of Domae and Vigna by using the low Young's Modulus first interlayer insulation film and the higher Young's Modulus second interlayer insulation film as taught by the APAF to form a device having reduced signal delay and high speed operation.

In re claim 2, Domae shows (fig. 4) that said pillar has a layered structure identical to a layered structure of said first interconnection layer in said first multilayer interconnection structure.

In re claim 4, Domae shows (fig. 4) that said pillar has an edge part engaging to a bottom surface (101A) of said second multilayer interconnection structure.

In re claim 5, Domae shows (fig. 4) that said pillar extends further in said second multilayer interconnection structure and has a layered structure identical to a layered

structure of said second interconnection layer in a part thereof extending in said second multilayer interconnection structure.

In re claim 7, Domae shows (fig. 4) an electrode pad (102) is formed on said second multilayer interconnection structure.

In re claim 8, the references do not specifically disclose that the plural numbers of pillars occupy at least 15% of the area. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to form the pillars in a desired amount suitable for the electrode pad reinforcement, since it has been held that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. In re Boesch, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

In re claim 9, Domae shows (fig. 4) that there is formed an active device (105) in region of said substrate right underneath said electrode pad.

In re claims 10-12 and 17-19 concerning the first and second interlayer insulating films each having a desired Young's Modulus, Domae and Vigna do not disclose those properties of the film. However, the APAF 1 shows that a first interlayer insulating film (14-17) and a second interlayer insulating film (18-21) each have the desired properties of the claimed invention in that the first film has Young's Modulus lower than the Young's Modulus of the second film. The specification on pages 7-12 lists all of the properties of the first interlayer insulating film of the porous organic film and the second interlayer insulating film of a CVD material. With such a configuration, the semiconductor device combined with the metallization structure has reduced signal delay and high speed operation. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of

ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the insulation materials of Domae and Vigna by using the low Young's Modulus first interlayer insulation film and the higher Young's Modulus second interlayer insulation film as taught by the APAF to form a device having reduced signal delay and high speed operation.

In re claim 13, Domae does not specifically disclose said pillar has a Young modulus of 30GPa or more. However, the pillar inherently has such a property since it has the same structure and materials as the instant invention.

In re claim 14, Domae shows (fig. 4) that in said first multilayer interconnection structure, said pillar is formed with plural numbers so as to be located at both sides of an interconnection pattern forming a part of said first interconnection layer. Figure 2B, shows an overhead view in which the pillar (11) surrounds the devices region.

In re claims 15 and 16, Vigna shows (figs. 1-3) that said pillar (15) forms a wall extending continuously on said surface of said substrate. The pillar extends continuously along a circumference of said substrate in said first and second multilayer interconnection structures and form a guard ring.

In re claims 29 and 30, Domae already shows (fig. 4) the pillar having a plurality of segments aligned straight from the substrate to the contact pad and the pillar engaging a bottom surface of the contact pad via a plug in a passivation film. When combined with Vigna, the pillar segments would be formed on the isolation structure.

Claim 21 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Domae (US Pub. 2002/0005584 A1) in view of Vigna et al. (US 6,605,873 B1) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Sugiyama et al. (US Pub. 2002/0040986 A1).

In re claim 20, Domae and Vigna show all of the elements of the claims except said pillar is provided in plural number on said substrate, and wherein there is formed a reinforcement structure in said first multilayer interconnection structure so as to extend diagonally between said plural pillars. Sugiyama et al. shows (fig. 7) a more detailed interconnection layout in which the interconnect structure (104) is formed diagonally in the multilayered structure of layers 88, 90, and 92 and within the boundaries of the pillar structure (102 and 106). While Sugiyama only discloses this configuration to form a specific connection scheme in the interconnect structure, it is inherent that such a structure also provides reinforcement to the interlayer insulation. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the interconnect of Domae and Vigna by forming the interconnects in a diagonal configuration as taught by Sugiyama to form a specific routing scheme.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed with respect to the 35 USC 103 Rejection above have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The applicant primarily asserts that the prior art references do not show all of the elements of the claims, specifically that the Applicant's Prior Art Figures 1-4 (APAF) do not cure the deficiencies of Domae and Vigna with respect to the insulating layer properties of the claims since the APAF 1-4

are related art. The examiner believes that the cited prior art references show all of the elements of the claims. The applicant argues that the APAF 1-4 are Related Art Figures and cannot be used in the rejection of the claims. Although the applicant tries to distinguish the term “Related Art" from the term “Prior Art,” the examiner views both meanings in the same way. The applicant's specification mentions that figure 4 is related art, but discloses an old technology having inherent problems which the inventor attempts to overcome (Applicant's Spec., pg. 9). This is therefore seen as a prior, known invention. Furthermore, the Background of the Invention (pg. 5) discloses that Fig. 4 shows an integrated circuit having a “conventional" structure. Usually, the term “conventional” with respect to patent applications is understood to mean “prior” or “well known.” The applicant has not given reasons as to why the "related art" is not "prior" art. It is assumed that the applicant intends that related art has a separate definition from prior art, thus making it distinguishable. Even if such is the case, related art is still viewed as art that does not comprise the applicant's inventive concept or art that has problems which the applicant is trying to overcome. In this manner, the related art is not the applicant's invention and is still "prior art." The APAF 1-4 are still proper for the rejection and the 35 USC 103 Rejection above is still proper.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MATTHEW E. WARREN whose telephone number is

(571)272-1737. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thur and alternating Fri 9:00-5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Kenneth Parker can be reached on (571) 272-2298. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Matthew E Warren/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2815

December 17, 2008